

1517 - 2017—500 Years of Reformation
1965 – Present—50+ Years of Dialogue
A Hopeful Future of Accompaniment

John Borelli (Georgetown University)
borellij@georgetown.edu

From Conflict to Communion: Lutheran Catholic-Common Commemoration of the Reformation in 2017 (2013, available on both the Lutheran World Federation and the Vatican [Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity] websites)

The first imperative: Catholics and Lutherans should always begin from the perspective of unity and not from the point of view of division in order to strengthen what is held in common even though the differences are more easily seen and experienced.

The second imperative: Lutherans and Catholics must let themselves continuously be transformed by the encounter with the other and by the mutual witness of faith.

The third imperative: Catholics and Lutherans should again commit themselves to seek visible unity, to elaborate together what this means in concrete steps, and to strive repeatedly toward this goal.

The fourth imperative: Lutherans and Catholics should jointly rediscover the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ for our time.

The fifth imperative: Catholics and Lutherans should witness together to the mercy of God in proclamation and service to the world.

Declaration on the Way: Church, Ministry and Eucharist, Commissioned by the U. S. Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (2015, available on the USCCB and the ELCA websites)

1. Implement consequences of the 32 agreements on church, ministry and Eucharist
2. Create a process and timetable for addressing remaining issues
3. Expansion of opportunities for receiving Holy Communion together
4. Address the moral issues that are often deemed to be church dividing
5. Deepen many common activities already well-established
 - a. Prayer: Week of Prayer for Unity and many other opportunities for prayer and study together
 - b. Education: develop common religious education opportunities, bible study, seminary and post-doctoral education, review of common statements
 - c. Collaboration: permanent working groups and commissions; serving those in need together; develop ways for collaboration in prayer, study and service; enter into covenants

Martin Luther and Vatican II: [“Martin Luther—Witness to Jesus Christ,” 1983]

1. An emphasis on the decisive importance of holy scripture for the life and teaching of the Church (*Dei Verbum*, The Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation)
2. The description of the church as “the people of God” (*Lumen Gentium*, The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, II)
3. The affirmation of the need for continued renewal of the church in its historical existence (*LG*, no. 8; *Unitatis Redintegratio*, The Decree on Ecumenism, no. 6)
4. The stress on confession of faith in the cross of Jesus Christ and of its importance for the life of the individual Christian and of the church as a whole (*LG*, no. 8; *UR*, no. 4; *Gaudium et Spes*, The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, no. 37)
5. The understanding of church ministries as service (*Christus Dominus*, Decree on the Pastoral office of the Bishops in the Church, no. 16; *Presbyterorum Ordinalis*, Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests)
6. The emphasis on the priesthood of all believers (*LG*, nos. 10-11; *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People, no. 24)
7. The commitment to the right of the individual to liberty in religious matters (*Dignitatis Humanae*, The Declaration on Religious Liberty)
8. The use of the vernacular in the liturgy, the possibility of communion in both kinds, and the renewal of the theology and celebration of the Eucharist (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, The Constitution on the Liturgy)

From the 95 Theses: [Martin E. Marty, *October 31, 1517: Martin Luther and the Day That Changed the World* (Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2016)]

1. When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said “Repent,” he intended the entire life of believers be repentance.
2. This word cannot be understood as sacramental penance, that is, as the confession and satisfaction that are performed under the ministry of priests.
3. It does not, however, refer solely to inward penitence; indeed, such inward penitence is nothing, unless it outwardly produces various mortifications of the flesh.

8. The penitential canons are imposed only on the living, and no burden ought to be imposed on the dying, according to them.
9. Therefore, the Holy Spirit acting in the Pope does well for us, in that, in his decrees, he always makes exception of the article of death and of necessity.

30. None are sure of the reality of their own contrition, much less of the attainment of the full remission of sins.
37. Any true Christian, whether living or dead, participates in all the blessings of Christ and the Church and this is granted by God, even without letters of indulgence.

54. Wrong is done to the word of God when, in the same sermon, an equal or longer time is spent on indulgences than on the word of God.

62. The true treasure of the Church is the Holy Gospel of the glory and grace of God.
68. They (indulgences) are in reality in no way to be compared to the grace of God and the devotion of the cross.